

**Subject:** Fwd: Your Neighborhoods First Newsletter: Special Year-End Edition

**From:** Anna Kozma

**Date:** 01/06/2017 10:21 AM

**To:** Anna Kozma

**BCC:** mike@wilshirecenter.com

Hello everyone,

Hope you and your family enjoyed a very pleasant holiday season, and are kicking off a wonderful new year!

I am taking the liberty of forwarding Councilmember Bonin's special edition year-end newsletter directly, below, in the event it has not made its way into your inbox yet.

The end of year edition focuses on local Neighborhood Heroes from each of our Council District 11 communities. I encourage you to take a look at the profiles from across the district--including our very own Judith Ciancimino, Julie Ross and Kathy Schwertfeger, Treva Miller, and Julie Zaller!

I'd also like to take a moment to say it is a genuine pleasure to serve with and for you all. We are incredibly lucky to have so many passionate CD11 neighbors, and in Westchester/Playa especially! I could not think of a more welcoming and engaged community to represent and serve, and it has truly been an honor working with you all for the past 365 days. Here's to rolling sleeves up and working even hard to put neighborhoods first on the westside in 2017!

Thank you all for your engagement and advocacy on behalf of your community, and wishing you and your family a truly wonderful new year.

Regards,

Anna Kozma

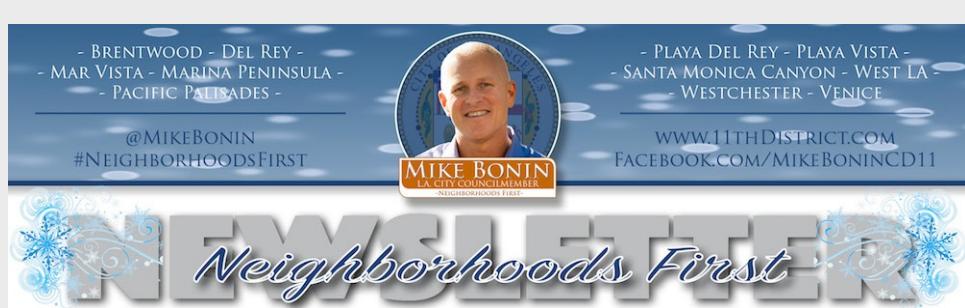
----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Mike Bonin's Neighborhoods First Newsletter** <[updates@11thdistrict.com](mailto:updates@11thdistrict.com)>

Date: Sat, Dec 31, 2016 at 7:22 AM

Subject: Your Neighborhoods First Newsletter: Special Year-End Edition

To: Anna Kozma <[anna.kozma@lacity.org](mailto:anna.kozma@lacity.org)>



### **Year-End Special Edition: 2016 Neighborhood Heroes**

Welcome to the Special Year-End Issue of Mike Bonin's "Neighborhoods First Newsletter"!

[Use this link](#) to read this issue on our website or share it with your friends on social media.

**IN THIS ISSUE:** Mike focuses on some of the unsung heroes who have worked so hard to make our neighborhoods great. We are spotlighting a series of "2016 Neighborhood Heroes" from various neighborhoods on the Westside. Find out more about them below!

You can find out more [about Mike](#), [meet your CD11 staff](#) and [see the latest videos](#) and updates from the Westside on our website at [www.11thdistrict.com](http://www.11thdistrict.com). And remember to [like Mike's Facebook page](#) and [follow him on Twitter](#) to always see the latest news about your neighborhood.

*Mike Bonin's Neighborhoods First Newsletter*

# 2016 NEIGHBORHOOD HEROES

*Year-End Special Edition*

As we look back on 2016, we thank the many unsung and under-appreciated neighbors who work every day to make our neighborhoods a great place to live, work and enjoy. In this special section, Mike has selected "neighborhood heroes" from throughout the Westside. Find out who Mike decided to recognize as a "2016 Neighborhood Hero" and read a personal message about each honoree from Mike below.

**Judith Ciancimino, Westchester**



*Judith Ciancimino is the friendly face of Westchester.*

*In the twenty years I have been working with neighbors in Westchester, I have been able to count on seeing Judith's warm and engaging smile at seemingly every community event I attended.*

*Back when I worked with Councilwoman Ruth Galanter in the 1990s, Judith helped produce multiple town hall meetings about airport expansion and public safety issues. When voters approved a new charter in 1999, Judith was among those who organized the local neighborhood council, and served multiple terms as its secretary. Judith is part of the core of people who founded the Annual Westchester Fourth of July Parade and has worked on it every year since its inception in 2000. Judith has also worked as a super volunteer with the Girl Scouts, The Elks Club, Ladies of the Elks, the Rotary Club of Playa Venice Sunrise, and the Lariats, the over 60 year-old dance troupe.*

*Judith is in now in her second career with the LAX Coastal Area Chamber of Commerce serving as their Office Manager. Previously, she headed up and ran their Transportation Management Association, which promoted cleaner air through carpooling and the use of public transportation.*

*Judith is a 34 year resident of Westchester, where she lives with her husband of 31 years, Tony. They have a daughter, Lauren, who has maintained local roots and works in Marina del Rey. Since Judith humbly declined this honor, and recommending I acknowledge various other people in the community, it took the surreptitious efforts of Tony and Lauren to help me compile this entry.*

Laurie Sale, Pacific Palisades



*Laurie Sale is a gem of a person, and Pacific Palisades is fortunate indeed to have her as a longtime resident and a community activist working to make her neighborhood better.*

*While Laurie is currently the force behind the new Business Improvement District in Pacific Palisades, I first met her in 2004, during Bill Rosendahl's first campaign for office. Her infectious spirit and "can do" attitude led Bill to hire her as his deputy for arts, education and culture -- and then as a "special projects deputy." It was one in a series of diverse career choices that have included: an early-childhood teaching credential; owning and operating the first and largest successful independent children's ONLY bookstore in the country; creating educational software for children at Philips Media; working as VP of publishing at the largest pop-up publishing company (Intervisual Books); serving as Editor in Chief of an online site for parents, kids, grandparents and teachers, (Knowledge Kids Network); marketing VP for the preeminent bilingual educator in the country, José Luis Orozco, and more work with and for children.*

*Although she started to retire, Sale got involved in creating a Business Improvement District in the Palisades. The BID is a nonprofit, made up of commercial property owners within a defined area in the village. The monies from assessments is pooled and administered by the BID to help provide the Pacific Palisades Business District with effective maintenance programs, marketing, and other services above and beyond those provided by the City. After a long journey, the BID was formally formed in January, 2016, and Laurie became the Executive Director. She's so proud of the BID in the Palisades, and says the Board of Directors is the "best in the west". They have a website, [www.palisadesbid.org](http://www.palisadesbid.org), where all of their projects, photos and newsletters are posted. The BID recently hosted a Thank You Luncheon for the West LAPD officers and firefighters from Stations 23 and 69.*

*Perhaps Laurie's proudest accomplishment is her children and four grandchildren. She and her mother, June Solnit Sale, an acclaimed child care expert, blog about the grandparenting and great-grandparenting experience <http://grandparentingplus.blogspot.com>. The topics are important to not only the "grands", but also to the parents and children's care-givers. Children's advocacy and education will always be one of Sale's greatest interests. She comes from a family of activists and is always ready to get involved in community and political issues.*

*This is what Laurie said about why she loves Palisades:*

**"The Palisades has been the most wonderful place to raise my two sons, Aaron and Jorge, and to live in." Laurie says. "I look forward to**

many more years here, as we remodeled our home so that we can stay here when we are much older. I love the neighbors, the shops and the community willing to work together for the benefit of all of us."

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Julie Ross and Kathy Schwertfeger, Playa del Rey



*When Julie Ross and Kathy Schwertfeger founded a nonprofit and named it Playa del Rey Guardians, they chose the name well. For the past several years, they have been the neighborhood's hard-working guardian angels.*

*Julie is a lifelong resident of Playa del Rey, who remembers growing up barefoot at the beach, part of a neighborhood that was one big family, where people left their doors unlocked and let their kids play outside or at the beach. Kathy has lived there for 20 years, raising her children in one of the last idyllic beach communities in Los Angeles.*

*Julie and Kathy both sprang into activism and came to my attention as a result of a proposed project that threatened lower Playa del Rey with an oversized, out-of-scale development. It started, Julie says, as "a group of really rowdy community activists down in the Jungle. One of them started a Facebook page aimed at getting the word out about the pending developments and galvanizing the community to take action. Somehow, we all found each other and thus began the process which has led us to where we are today."*

*They formed the Guardians, and spent hundreds of hours in the City archives and the Coastal Commission archives and speaking to experts to learn about land use law, toxic plumes, visual impact studies, methane, subsidence and environmental issues unique to the coastal community. They have been the best partners my staff and I could possibly have, helping us build and inform a case to the Department of City Planning about the appropriate and legal land uses in the neighborhood.*

*For Julie, it was a mission to preserve the "village" she had grown up in. For Kathy, it was an opportunity to save the community where she built memories of raising her family.*

*Here's what Julie and Kathy say about Playa del Rey:*

**"Oddly, what started as a fight over development has bonded me to my community and led me to understand what a treasure we have in Playa del Rey," says Kathy. "We are a small beach town where it still feels like everyone knows everyone and can see everyone at the local coffee shops, restaurants and, yes, bars. We don't have chain anything. If you have nothing to do on a Saturday—all you need to do is go to Yoga on**

the Beach and the rest of the day will fill itself up with play and fun with your neighbors. Playa del Rey is also a beautiful place, with panoramic views from the Santa Monica Bay to the Hollywood sign and we are blessed with environmental treasures like the Ballona Wetlands on our doorstep.”

Manny Cloribel, Playa Vista



*In just a few short years, Playa Vista has grown from an idea into a community alive with families, children, small businesses and a whole lot more. Manny Cloribel -- nicknamed “PV Manny” -- is one of the people who has made it his mission to bond the neighborhood together and celebrate its adventures and communal experiences. He founded the website [MannyVista.com](http://MannyVista.com), which updates residents on anything and everything there is to do in and around Playa Vista.*

*Manny is one of Playa Vista’s “pioneers” -- one of the first residents, having lived there for more than 10 years. He currently serves as President of his Homeowners Association. He is active with PVPAL, the Community Police Action Board, the Westchester Neighborhood Council, and various other community organizations where he represents Playa Vista’s concerns.*

*Crime prevention has always been on his radar and one of the reasons why he started the Playa Vista Neighborhood Exchange, a resident-led group with close to 2000 members that exchange information beneficial for Playa Vista. He is passionate about making the community safe and a place that everyone is proud to call home.*

*Manny is also actively involved in many charitable endeavors. He has personally fundraised more than \$5000 for Outdoor Outreach, a local charity that gives at-risk and underprivileged youth the opportunity to develop passion and joy for the outdoors. He was also the team captain in fundraising for United Way’s Homewalk hoping to eradicate homelessness in Los Angeles County. He is always there to lend a helping hand, whether it be supporting a fundraiser for Playa Vista Elementary School or volunteering to man the blood drive donations hosted by the Mom’s Group, he truly believes in giving back and always seeks out ways that he can help others.*

*His ongoing volunteer work, his interest in crime prevention, and his continual involvement with PVPAL is key to keeping Playa Vista the safe and beautiful place that it is.*

*Here's what Manny says about why he loves Playa Vista:*

**“I love Playa Vista because it's where I started my family. I have a story**

**about every nook and corner of the neighborhood. Its sidewalks and businesses here are like an extension of my home. Playa Vista has grown with me, and I love seeing how this place continues to flourish and thrive."**

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**Jataun Valentine, Venice**



*Venice is a community that has seen a lot of changes over the past few decades -- but there is one constant -- Jataun Valentine. A Venice icon whose family has been in the community for more than a century, Jataun provides a giving spirit, a watchful eye, a forceful presence and a moral authority.*

*One of the few descendants of Irving Tabor (one of Venice's co-founders) who still lives in Venice, Jataun gives untold time making her community better. I first met her in the 1990s in her capacity as an advocate for seniors, and as a volunteer with the senior programs at the Oakwood Recreation Center. She has volunteered with the senior lunch program, and has organized more than 100 trips for our seniors. She also personally provides transportation for seniors to medical appointments, grocery stores, and just about any place they need to go. She spearheaded the Senior's Club involvement in the murals now at the center — "Oakwood's Living Histories" in 2003 and "Unity in the Community" in 2005.*

*Jataun has spent over 13 years volunteering with the Prison Ministry, where she brings holiday presents to children whose parents are incarcerated. She has also worked with the Mildred Cursch Foundation, helping with its program that distributes groceries to low-income seniors in Venice. She regularly volunteers to read to the blind. She is famous for her special holiday celebrations -- dressing as the Easter Bunny for an egg hunt, adorning her house with an elaborate Christmas display, and hosting a remarkable Halloween trick-or-treat event at her home.*

*Jataun is a passionate and outspoken voice in local politics. I've been lucky to have her as an ally on some issues, and unfortunate indeed to have her as an adversary on others. She is active with Venice Community Housing Corporation, the Venice Historical Society, and POWER, and has served in the past on the Oakwood Park Advisory Board, the Oakwood Beautification Committee, and the Venice Neighborhood Action Coalition.*

*Here's what Jataun has to say about her community:*

***"You can't beat the Venice weather! I've volunteered with blind seniors, delivered Thanksgiving dinners to seniors, called bingo for seniors at Oakwood Park and I try to be involved with issues that keep Venice home for all walks of life. I love Venice."***

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Marty Rubin and Joan Winters, Westdale



*Long before there was a chorus of elected officials, community leaders, and residents warning of the impacts of Santa Monica Airport and calling for its closure, there were Marty Rubin and Joan Winters, doing the often lonely and pioneering work for their neighborhood and the neighborhoods near the airport.*

*During the early days of the Mar Vista Community Council, Marty and Joan warned of the health impacts of emissions from the airport, and sought to build a coalition for their effort. They founded Concerned Residents Against Airport Pollution in 2003; set up the website [jetairpollution.com](http://jetairpollution.com) and began a list serve of those in the community concerned about air pollution, noise pollution, and safety impacts from Santa Monica Airport (SMO), and work with political representatives, the media, environmental and community groups to educate and advocate for necessary changes. I've seen them at work, educating and persuading Mike Gordon, Bill Rosendahl, Ted Lieu, Karen Bass and others about the significant health impacts of the airport. Their work has been foundational and crucial in efforts to curtail and eventually close the airport and turn it into a park.*

*In addition to his work on the airport, Marty represents North Westdale at the LAX Community Noise Roundtable and is co-chair of the Mar Vista Community Council's Airport committee. Since June, 2013 Marty has served as President of the North Westdale Neighborhood Association and Joan as Secretary since 2012. They also edit and publish a monthly four-page NWNA newsletter. Under Marty's leadership, the NWNA has put on three Fall Block Parties that included a stage show of local talent of all ages.*

*Marty and Joan discuss why they love Westdale:*

**"We like that the community of North Westdale, located immediately east and downwind of Santa Monica Airport (SMO), is an evolving mix of older longtime residents and new younger families. Our purpose for forming Concerned Residents Against Airport Pollution, and for much of our involvement with the North Westdale Neighborhood Association is to awaken and inform neighbors about Santa Monica Airport's (SMO) extreme toxic air pollution impacts from jet emissions and from lead exposure due to piston aircraft's use of leaded aviation gasoline. Noise pollution and safety hazards on our community, are major concerns too. We really like it when residents get fired up and involved."**

Regina and Steve Weller, Venice



Venice

# CHAPLAINS STEVE & REGINA WELLER

## 2016 NEIGHBORHOOD HEROES

Year-End Special Edition

*Regina and Steve Weller are Venice's miracle workers, relentless, compassionate missionaries of hope. Together, on a shoestring budget and with tons of determination, they have helped house hundreds of homeless people or reunite them with their families.*

*The Wellers conduct homeless outreach in Venice and help connect people forced to live on the street with services, housing and often their families. This year alone, the Wellers – LAPD Chaplains and pastors at Venice Foursquare Church -- have helped 118 homeless people get into rehab, get into housing or get reunited with their families. Their work is an important part of the comprehensive efforts we are making to reduce and prevent homelessness in Venice.*

*Steve describes himself as an Army Veteran and a former green beret, with an expertise in ham radio operation. A recovering alcoholic, Steve says his life turned around when he got sober. He facilitated recovery meetings in various areas of Los Angeles including Venice, Skid Row, at a 500-bed shelter in Los Angeles, and at the VA facility, and in 2003 became the Senior Pastor of Venice Foursquare Church. In 2006, he was ordained and credentialed as a Police Chaplain. He is the Director of the 501c3 public charity, the Homeless Task Force, assisting the unhoused in the Venice community and adjacent with safe haven options.*

*Regina, who met Steve in Venice in 20 years ago and married at Venice's Foursquare Church, is a native of the San Fernando Valley who has always had a calling for helping others. While she worked as a paralegal, in engineering, and in aerospace, she says she always "had a heart for disenfranchised women living on the street," and became an ordained credentialed Crisis Chaplain in 2007. Since then, she has deployed on a voluntary basis with LAPD's Venice Beach Detail, assisting the homeless. She is currently the Executive Director of the public charity, the "Homeless Task Force", and has an abiding interest in the health and well being of the Venice community where she has lived for 23 years.*

*"It is especially gratifying for me to see a person overcome great challenges, become hopeful about their future, and become an asset, if even in the smallest way, to others," Regina says.*

*I am proud to help fund the Wellers work, and to have them as a key part of our "Venice Forward" initiative to end homelessness in Venice. Thank you, Regina and Steve Weller for doing inspiring work each and every day!*

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**Demetrios Mavromichalis, Mar Vista**



**Mar Vista**

**DEMETRIOS MAVROMICHALIS**

**2016 NEIGHBORHOOD HEROES**

*Year-End Special Edition*

*If you've strolled down Venice Boulevard in Mar Vista lately, you've walked through the landscape of the dream of Demetrios Mavromichalis.*

*A Mar Vista native, Demetrios has spent years dreaming of, planning for, and working to realize a better Mar Vista, and especially a better downtown Mar Vista. As owner and proprietor of the Venice Grind coffee shop (and pop-up art gallery), Demetrios was one of the first to see that Venice Boulevard could be a neighborhood's Main Street, and he has been one of the key players helping make that happen. He has recruited other local businesses, mentored them, and helped promote them. He is one of the cadre of founders of the Mar Vista Farmers Market, a remarkably successful community building venture that has helped identify and brand the area.*

*A member of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce and a sponsor of the Mar Vista Art Walk and other local events, Demetrios is a constant presence on the Mar Vista stretch of Venice Boulevard, welcoming customers, introducing neighbors to one another, and cajoling new people into becoming active in the next community project. He is one of the investors in the "Mar Vista," a new restaurant that is destined to continue to make the area an attraction for foodies, and provide another walkable option for locals looking for a great meal.*

*The revitalization of downtown Mar Vista is a great neighborhood success story. It has been made possible by many dedicated people, but Demetrios deserves special recognition as someone who saw the potential early, inspired others to share his vision, and busted his butt to make it happen. He is undoubtedly the unofficial "Mayor of the Boulevard."*

*The Venice Grind is a great spot, and it has become a virtual satellite office where I meet with constituents. I'm grateful to Demetrios for all his great work.*

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**Kathleen Durbin, Brentwood**



**Brentwood**

**KATHLEEN DURBIN**

**2016 NEIGHBORHOOD HEROES**

*Year-End Special Edition*

*Mandeville Canyon, deep above Brentwood in the Santa Monica Mountains, can*

seem like a world away from Los Angeles. For Kathleen Durbin, it is a special place to be guarded, tended to and protected. As president of the Mandeville Canyon Association, she has led a volunteer board of residents to do just that.

Kathleen became involved in MCA in 2007 with the encouragement of Bill Rosendahl and became President in 2008. The association represents 525 homeowners who live in a community rich with flora and fauna. MCA was the first HOA formed in the Canyon after the beginnings of an elaborate botanical garden community designed by the Garden Land Company in the late 1920's.

Kathleen retired briefly last year, but is back in the saddle once again, spearheading her passion project -- the People's Path. The project calls for the installation of split rail fencing, 6 foot-wide decomposed walkways and paths up and down the two-plus mile stretch of Mandeville Canyon Road. The goal is to have a completed and unobstructed walking path for all residents and visitors alike. Kathleen has led the way among her fellow association members and the Council Office on the efforts to research the entire lower Mandeville Canyon community in order to determine how to continue to build the People's Path. She has identified each location that can be added to complete the path, and she and her partners have reached out to those property owners where there are gaps in order to encourage them to participate in the project.

In her role as president, Kathleen oversees an active and diverse community that has an unwavering history of environmental support for its unique community. The MCA organizes an annual Holiday Lights Program, manages 24-Hour Surveillance Cameras in the Canyon, created the Mandeville Foundation, a 501c3 organization that supports public improvement projects within the Mandeville community, and offers four family events each year.

Kathleen likes to walk the Canyon on Sundays to meet homeowners, often knocking on doors to say hello or ask what homeowners think of the neighborhood goings-on. Safety is the primary concern and there are always a myriad of questions to be answered and issues of concern that MCA helps its residents navigate through the City of Los Angeles. Kathleen commends the dedicated work of her 13 member board as the real reason behind MCA's success.

Kathleen and her husband Steve have lived in Mandeville for 36 years.

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**Treva Miller, Ladera**



Treva Miller is the kind of person who sees a problem in her neighborhood and gets right down to fixing it.

When Treva moved to Ladera in 2012, she felt her new neighborhood, a small

part of northeast Westchester oddly nestled between north Inglewood and unincorporated Los Angeles County, was getting ignored by the City of Los Angeles, and she joined with her neighbors to get things changed. She joined the Ladera Heights Civic Association, invited me and other public officials to hear their concerns at the first Resident Community Meeting in more than a decade, and then in 2015 formed the 63rd & Acacia Street Neighborhood Watch Group, spanning the blocks of City of Los Angeles homes. As Neighborhood Watch Captain, she spearheaded initiatives to improve public safety on city streets including getting curbs painted to alleviate blind spots, and getting a new four-way stop sign installed at a dangerous intersection. With the support of the Neighborhood Council of Westchester Playa, she and her neighbors were able to secure what they consider their greatest achievement to date -- new street signs to replace ones that were in badly in need of repair and more than 30 years old.

Currently, Treva is chair of the Ladera 90056 Committee, which is leading the movement to get the City to approve officially naming the Los Angeles portion of Ladera Heights -- "Ladera."

Treva is a native of Los Angeles who has spent more than 30 years working for the City of Los Angeles and the State of California in the field of public and community relations. She currently works for Los Angeles World Airports LAX Community Relations Division.

**"I love Ladera, because it's a closely knit diverse community with a hometown feel. I am proud to call this beautiful community my home and I am prouder still that I have helped to enhance the lifestyle and safety of our neighbors."**

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#### Julie Zaller, Westchester/Playa del Rey



Julie Zaller is a one woman Kickstarter campaign. Name an issue, a cause or a community concern. It gets attention and momentum when she jumps on board.

Julie is the founder of the 2,000-plus member strong Facebook group: Moms of Westchester/Playa del Rey. The private group provides a safe way for mothers in the neighborhood to network, share resources, help each other out, and improve the local community. Whether rallying volunteers for various local efforts, sharing parenting tips, encouraging involvement in the local Neighborhood Council, or raising awareness about crime or community problems, the group (now in its third year) continues to flourish and serve as a shining example of the power of community.

I first met Julie in 2014 when she was organizing a GoFundMe campaign for the heroic employee of a neighborhood taco stand who saved a local child from an

*attempted kidnapping. Julie was fierce in her determination to rally the community to thank Jesús for his efforts. Since then, she has been equally vigilant in organizing Moms to support improvements in our local parks, or in alerting City agencies to scofflaw companies usurping public parking in our neighborhoods.*

*Julie is a mother of three boys, and is married to an LMU graduate. She actively volunteers at her boys' school and enjoys working on community projects to help Westchester maintain its small town feel. She has lived in Westchester since 2003, and her husband has lived in the area since he attended LMU beginning in 1995. She has a background in business management, and prior to becoming a stay at home mom, she managed the business and marketing aspects of a medical provider in Santa Monica. Julie is proud of the support network she kickstarted and the collective commitment to making Westchester/Playa a better place to live.*

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**Regan Kibbee, Venice**



*Regan Kibbee, a native Angelino, has lived in Venice for over 35 years working to create community through connecting people.*

*After years of event production and promotion for tech companies and non-profit arts groups, she transitioned her focus when she became a mom. She helped develop and moderates "Venice Moms," an online network supporting Westside families where members share experiences, resources, advice, and opportunities to meet in person. The forum has grown to over 2000 subscribers.*

*As a teenager, her family joined an intentional community (commune). Her positive experiences in this extended family environment fostered her deep appreciation of community. She earned a degree in Art History from UCLA, then spent a couple of years in Japan. On her return, she began working as an event producer and promoter including the Japan America Society of Southern California and later for SPARC, the Social and Public Art Resource Center (in the historic old Venice Police Station).*

*Regan writes regularly for the Community Bulletin section of the Westside paper, The Argonaut, covering schools, clubs, non-profits, and people who "give back" to their local communities. She serves on the Steering Committee of the 60 year old, non-profit cooperative Sholem Community, which offers non-religious Jewish cultural programs, including a Sunday school, for secular Jews and multicultural families.*

*Seeking to protect the unique character of Venice, she has collaborated with fellow Venetians to successfully appeal some out-of-character development projects.*

**“For me, the old saying, ‘Keep Venice Weird’ is about continuing to embrace diversity, creativity and a range of experiences for a more vibrant community in which to live,” she says.**

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**Natividad Santiago, West LA**



*Natividad Santiago has helped bring her hometown of Oaxaca, Mexico into the spotlight in her new home in West Los Angeles.*

*For several years, Natividad has been the lead organizer of the annual Festival of Tejate at Stoner Park in West L.A. -- a tremendous celebration of Oaxacan culture that has given the neighborhood's large Oaxacan population an opportunity to emerge from the shadows and assert themselves as a visible, vital and essential part of the community.*

*The culture of Oaxaca, a state in southwestern Mexico, is often celebrated with community festivals in each town, celebrating the local saint or tradition important to the community. The Festival of Tejate at Stoner Park celebrates family and the traditional town of Tlacolula through folk dance, stories, music, food and drink. The festival celebrates Tejate, a traditional Oaxacan drink made of maize, cacao and mamey pits. For nearly a decade, thousands of people visit Stoner Park on Labor Day weekend for a competition awarding the best Tejate in Los Angeles.*

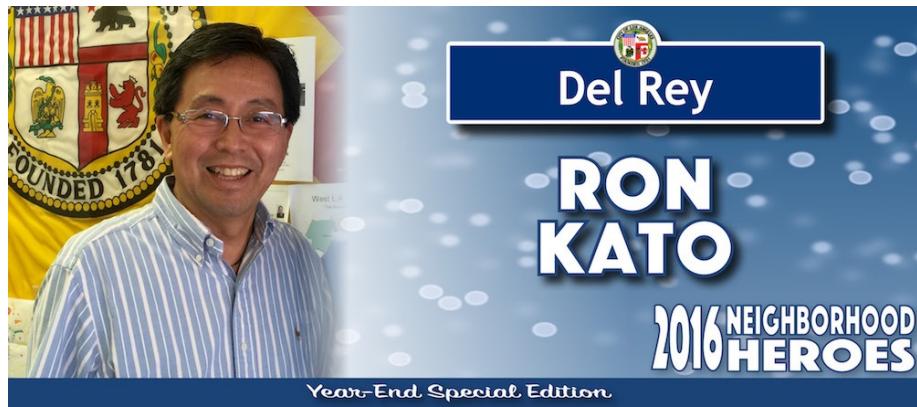
*Natividad organizes the event with her husband, Gabriel, with whom she performs traditional dance.*

**“The art of folkloric dance, which is part of our tradition, was a childhood passion hence we decided to form a folkloric dance group named Guish-Bac and together with the help of merchants and residents we decided to establish a yearly event named Feria Del Tejate where we perform our dances and share it with the community. I have been enriched by people from different countries and cultures in the community and look forward to sharing my experience with the next generation.”**

*Thank you to Natividad, Gabriel, Grupo Folklorico Guish-Bac, and all Oaxacan Angelenos for making Oaxacan culture part of the vibrant cultural fabric of our city.*

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**Ron Kato, Del Rey**



*Ron is a native Angelino whose humility belies his steadfast commitment to improving the health and wellness of the people of Los Angeles. He has deep roots in the 11th District and currently serves as L.A. City Health Commissioner for the 11th District. I first got to know Ron when the MOA Wellness Center (where he serves as executive director) relocated to Del Rey from West Hollywood. MOA Wellness Center provides integrative medical therapies to thousands throughout the region. I witnessed firsthand Ron's heart and compassion as he provided comfort and palliative care to my friend and predecessor, the beloved former Councilmember Bill Rosendahl.*

*Ron grew up in West L.A.-Sawtelle and attended Nora Sterry Elementary where he served as class president and greeted then Councilmember Marvin Braude. Ron graduated from University High School in 1975 and holds an MBA from University of Hawaii and a BA in Sociology from UC San Diego. He was instrumental in getting Del Rey Neighborhood Council to establish a first of its kind Health and Wellness Committee. Ron serves on the Del Rey NC Outreach Committee and helps plan the annual Del Rey Day which brings together residents while building community spirit. Ron was also active with Let's Move West L.A. which supported First Lady Michelle Obama's initiative to combat childhood obesity while promoting healthier diets. He supported the City's adoption of the Health and Wellness chapter of the General Plan and is working to support its implementation. Ron has worked to promote both wellness and art in schools of the 11th District over the past five years with MOA Wellness Center sponsorship of the annual art contest which sends the local winning entry to an international contest held in Atami, Japan. Ron lives in Mar Vista with his wife and best friend Virginia, a pediatrician practicing integrative medicine in Santa Monica, and their three boys who are currently studying at Colgate University, UCLA and Palisades Charter High School.*

*When Bill Rosendahl died, he had been serving as my appointee to the City of Los Angeles Health Commission. Ron gladly accepted my offer to fill Bill's shoes on that important panel.*

***"I'm honored to continue Bill's work on the L.A. City Health Commission and I'm committed to fostering better health for all Angelenos in body, mind and spirit."***

*Thank you Ron for continuing Bill's work on the Health Commission. It is a fitting tribute to his legacy.*

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***Doug Suisman, Santa Monica Canyon***



## Santa Monica Canyon

# DOUG SUISMAN

2016 NEIGHBORHOOD HEROES

Year-End Special Edition

*Doug Suisman is so heavily engaged in making his Santa Monica Canyon neighborhood a better and a safer place that it surprised me to find out he had so much time for such an impressive professional career making neighborhoods great everywhere.*

*I first got to know Doug as president of the BOCA Neighborhood Association in Santa Monica Canyon for several years. In that role he led his community in discussions with the City of Santa Monica and the City of Los Angeles's Department of Transportation, preparing for the closure of the California Incline and working to mitigate and minimize any impacts diverted traffic could have on this neighborhood. These discussions helped pave the way for traffic mitigations to protect his neighbors, and included new signage and pavement striping. In short, his work prevented what could have been a neighborhood disaster.*

*Since then, Doug also worked closely with the neighboring Santa Monica Canyon Civic Association as it reviewed plans for a new sidewalk and bridge safety feature across from Canyon Charter School. He advised the board on safety measures, and suggested options for future improvements. In addition, Doug has worked to design the Palisades Charter High School Gateway Project, which is a long range project to address pedestrian safety issues and the school's desire for a more prominent entrance to the campus. The design proposes a Senior Garden of native landscaping in a space which was a previously underused blacktop covered space behind a chain link fence. Since the 90s, he has worked on a range of neighborhood issues, including pedestrian improvements, landscape enhancements, upgrading the beach tunnel, improving the local schools, and a lot more.*

*In his spare time, Doug is an internationally recognized, award-winning urban designer and architect. He founded Suisman Urban Design in 1990 to create great city places by integrating architecture, research, landscape, and environmental graphics. His projects include transit systems, cultural districts, university campuses, civic centers, plazas, parks, and streetscapes. He is currently the lead designer on the Great Streets project for Burlington, Vermont. His iQuilt cultural district plan for downtown Hartford has won an AIA Honor Award and two major grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. He has recently completed renovations of two Los Angeles landmarks: Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade and the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum. Mr. Suisman, in partnership with RAND Corporation, designed The Arc, an acclaimed plan for a Palestinian state which won the top master plan award and Future Project of the Year award at the 2010 World Architecture Festival. His classic monograph, Los Angeles Boulevard, was republished in 2014 in a 25th Anniversary edition.*

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**Before You Go...**



***Thank you for reading the Special Year-End issue of Mike Bonin's Neighborhoods First Newsletter.***

***For more about Mike and Council District 11, please visit [www.11thdistrict.com](http://www.11thdistrict.com)***

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